

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 8, line 28, and ending on page 9, line 18, with the following paragraph:

In the fifth embodiment, the closed air gap interconnect structure includes a substrate; a first sacrificial dielectric coated on the substrate, the first coated sacrificial dielectric having therein a patterned set of support regions by lithography and filled and planarized with a robust line support dielectric, the first sacrificial dielectric having therein contact via holes patterned by reactive ion etching; a second sacrificial dielectric; an optional hard mask layer disposed on the second sacrificial dielectric coated on the first sacrificial dielectric, the second sacrificial dielectric and the hard mask having lithographically patterned line trenches; a conductive material filled into the line trenches and the via holes and planarized such that top of the filled conductive material is substantially coplanar with the top surface of the hard mask; an optional conductive material cap disposed on top surfaces of the conductive material filled into the trenches; an optional first dielectric cap layer disposed on the hard mask layer and the conductive material cap; and a stencil with a regular array of holes on top of the first dielectric cap layer, wherein the regular array of holes have been transferred into the first dielectric layer and the hard mask layer by a reactive ion etch process; wherein the first and second sacrificial dielectrics have been extracted to form air gaps and a second dielectric cap has been deposited to pinch off the tops of the regular array of holes in the first cap layer thereby closing off the regular array of holes forming the closed air gap interconnect structure.